

Sister Rose Regina Smith

Let me begin by saying that being chosen a “Wisdom Figure” of the Albany Province was a surprise and is an honor. I do not certainly think of myself in this way, but this call provided time for me to reflect upon my life as a Sister of St. Joseph.

I am sustained in the knowledge that God loves me “as is” no matter what my choices have been, are, and will be, that our God lives in me, surrounds me with love and care and is present in my relationships with others. This mystery leaves me almost breathless. St. Ignatius encouraged his followers to find love in everything- in our joys and in happiness but especially in the unpleasantness, the hurts, and slights, and in the times when we are overlooked. More recently we have been reminded to find love in the words of St. Brother Andre who wrote, “be grateful when crosses and suffering come into your life- you are very fortunate.” These words are indeed difficult to make one’s own! I have tried over the years to reflect upon them and to live them out.

Happily, I am sustained and supported by the sisters with whom I live and by that of so many others. My gratitude knows no bounds for the years that have been given to me to grow, to love our God and to pray for the whole world I set out to make a better place in which to live 59 years ago.

What I never expected to experience was to be out of the religious habit and to be free from the “bells” and rules that regulated our past lives. In the 1950’s our life style prevented us from being associated with the “world” for fear that we might lose our vocation. As time passed, I realized that we were expected to live in two worlds – the monastic world and the apostolic world. During these years they did battle with one another, created tension and for me, mediated against a peace I so longed for.

Living as a Sister of St. Joseph and endeavoring to be all that implies, I know it is up to me to become the woman our God has called me to be. Thankfully, there are few vestiges of our former way of life. The bells and the horarium have been replaced by my response to the call within me. If I am to be a holy woman, it is my responsibility.

Our present life style endowed as it is with the freedom to choose, to go, to move, to pray, to help a world in need has enabled us to serve the “dear neighbor” with a greater heart. The community has provided countless opportunities to grow in spirit. Each of us has been educated, and the talents and gifts that make us who we are have been nurtured by our response.

When I became a Sister of St. Joseph, my motivations were to save my soul and to try to make the world a better place. These were certainly praise worthy and laudable motives. Over the years of praying and being receptive hopefully to the graces I have received, patterning my life after the human Jesus, finding him in his words and actions are exciting, invigorating and challenging every day endeavors.